

## EVENTS

# The Singing Zoologist knows his niche and plays to it

By *Janet Van Vleet* of the Abilene Reporter News

Posted: *Yesterday 9:00 p.m.*

Drawn by the music scene in Austin in the early 1990s, Lucas Miller not only found a job, he found a calling.

The Lexington, Kentucky, native received a bachelor's degree in zoology from Ohio's Miami University in 1991. He really had no idea what he was going to do with his degree.

"After I graduated from college, I got a job working on a sailboat that did field trips for kids," Miller said in a phone interview. "We took them out and taught them about ocean animals and maritime history."

The job also required entertaining the kids during the four-hour boat trip. When Miller started the job, they gave him songs written by his predecessor.

"I didn't like them," Miller said. "They were not always scientifically correct, and the music was not appealing to an adult audience."

So he started writing and performing his own songs.

Then, when he moved to Austin, the zoo was looking for an educator. It was a teaching-through-entertainment idea. He wrote even more songs while working at the zoo.

In 1994, he decided to test the waters on his own and started a

business teaching children science through music. He's now known as the Singing Zoologist.

"It's a narrow niche — which is why it works," Miller said. "People know exactly what they're getting."

In his "Metamorphosis" video, he uses a cute puppet that changes from an egg to a tadpole to a frog. The funny thing is, when he wrote the song, he already had the puppet. His mom had given it to him in 1999.

"People love giving me these puppets," he said. "I have an extra trunk for all the ones I have no use for."

Miller will perform Tuesday at the downtown Abilene Public Library as part of the summer show series put on by Young Audiences of Abilene and the library. Tuesday's show will be a bit different from one he would perform in a classroom.

At the library, the ages of the children in the audience will range from toddlers to elementary school students. He said elementary students like his rap "Living in a Wetland" and "The Anaconda La Bamba." The younger kids love "Stinkle, Stinkle Little Skunky" and "Send Them Back Home to Brazil (Fire Ant Song)." He said what he sings will depend on the audience.

Miller's been in Abilene before. In fact, one of his favorite moments as an entertainer/educator happened here.

He met a librarian at a conference who invited him to perform at her school. She bought a CD and took it home and played it for the students. When he came to Abilene to perform, he got a surprise.

"When I started singing, 400 kids started singing along," he said.

Miller said he won't ever forget Abilene.

Go to this link to see some of Miller's greatest hits: [bit.ly/1K8DBuB](http://bit.ly/1K8DBuB).

IF YOU GO:

What: Young Audiences/Abilene Public Library Summer Performer Series with Lucas Miller

When: 10:45 a.m. and 3 p.m. Tuesday

Where: Second-floor auditorium at the downtown Abilene Public Library, 202 Cedar St.

Admission: Free

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**About Janet Van Vleet**

Janet Van Vleet is the arts & entertainment editor for the Abilene Reporter-News.

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